THE DISABLED STUDENTS’ ALLOWANCES (DSA) NEEDS ASSESSMENT - INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Why do I need an assessment?

An assessment is required because your funding body will not process your DSA application any further without this assessment! Many students also find this a useful and informative process.

Although the evidence you have sent to your funding body has established your eligibility for the DSA, a full assessment is also required in order for your specific needs in relation to your studies to be considered. This better enables us to evaluate and recommend appropriate equipment, assistive software and specialist study skills or other relevant support. The DSA Needs assessment is not the same as the assessment you may have recently had with your Educational Psychologist or Specialist Teacher.

Do I have to pay for the assessment?

Our assessment fee is £550, which your funding body funds directly via your DSA so you personally do not need to fund this. This covers both your initial assessment and any reviews or updates to your DSA that you may need throughout your current studies. We can also review your needs if you move on to further courses of study. If you present with an additional diagnosis; move on to PGCE or postgraduate research; have a break of 2 years or more in your studies or if it is more than 5 years since your last DSA assessment or review assessment, you will be eligible for a funded review of your needs which we can carry out. All reviews must be authorised in writing by the funding body and your review must be carried out by the Assessment Centre who carried out your initial assessment.

What is involved in the assessment?

Firstly can we reassure you that there are no tests involved in the assessment! The assessment takes place in the comfortable and informal environment of our ACCESS Centre and is a discussion and exploration of your needs with one of our experienced assessors, who will consider the impacts of your disability/specific learning difficulty/long-term medical condition/mental health condition on your academic studies. The assessor will consider support, study strategies or assistive software you have had previously or are currently accessing. Study aids and strategies relevant to your current course of study will then be considered and where appropriate, there will also be the opportunity to evaluate appropriate assistive technology, aids and equipment. You may also be asked to give your permission for your assessment to be observed by another assessor for training purposes.
**How long will the assessment take?**

The assessment can take some time if the issues to be discussed are particularly complex. We would therefore suggest that you allow yourself at least 2 hours, although your assessment may not take as long as this.

**I need practical support/assistance or other support at assessment – such as a CSW or BSL Interpreter – what should I do?**

You can bring your own support worker with you, or if you contact us, we will arrange for support to be made available. However, you do need to advise us of these and any other particular requirements as far in advance of your assessment as possible, particularly if specialist support is required or if you are a wheelchair user/have reduced mobility. For interpreters, we do need as much notice as possible, as these need to be booked through an external agency.

**You have sent me a Pre-Assessment Form to complete. Is this essential?**

Yes! Our Auditing Body (The Disabled Students Allowances Quality Assurance Group (DSA-QAG) require this form to be completed by all students prior to assessment. This form provides us with essential pre-assessment information, enabling the Assessor to familiarise themselves with disability-related study issues that have been raised and equipment/software/support previously or currently used. This also enables us to get back to you prior to your assessment if there is any further information that we require or any additional points that we need to clarify.

If you already have your own computer, the form also asks you to provide information on the age of your computer and the specifications (make, model, processor type and speed, hard disk drive, RAM (memory), software installed etc) and approximate age of this equipment, as this will help us when we are evaluating any additional equipment or software at assessment. **It is essential that we have these specifications,** so please contact us if you have difficulty in finding this information, as we can talk you through this process. If your computer is portable, you may wish to bring it with you to assessment.

You will also need to provide us with information relating to additional items that you have, including tablet computers, e-readers, printers/scanners and Smartphones – including personal, social and academic-related apps that you use on your phone.

**You should be aware however, that Student Finance England will not reimburse items (including equipment) purchased prior to your Needs Assessment.**

Please complete the form as fully and accurately as possible. It is helpful if you fill it in and return it to us electronically. If you do have any difficulties in filling in the form, then please contact us and we can talk you through this.

**Although the primary purpose of the form is to inform your Assessor, it is essential that this is completed/provided prior to assessment. Therefore, if you have not already provided this, you will be asked to complete a form at your assessment.**
Is there anything further that the ACCESS Centre needs me to provide prior to the assessment?

If you have not already provided us with a copy of your Educational Psychologist’s report or other evidence of your disability/long-term medical condition/mental health issue, you must send this to us as soon as possible. If you have not retained a copy of the evidence that you sent to your funding body (and we do need a copy of the same information), you should contact us as soon as possible, as in exceptional circumstances we may be able to request a copy directly from them.

Please note that we can only assess for the conditions we have evidence for, so if there are any other conditions you wish to be taken into account during the assessment, please also forward us evidence of this prior to the date of your assessment.

If you have previously had a DSA Needs Assessment, please also advise us of this and provide us with a copy of this report or contact us if you no longer have this. However, you should note that, unless your previous Assessment Centre has closed down, we will not be able to carry out a review of your needs.

It is also essential that we have a copy of the letter from your funding body agreeing to you going ahead with the assessment. We do need the actual letter and not just the email as this letter contains additional information that is not included in the email.

Remember! We do need the following prior to assessment:

- A copy of the evidence you sent to your funding body
- A copy of the funding body letter approving you going ahead with the assessment
- Our completed Pre-Assessment Form

Do I need to bring anything with me to assessment?

At assessment we will also require information on previous qualifications and grades gained, so it may be helpful to also bring these details with you. Please also ensure that you advise us if you have changed your address or phone numbers since contacting us, as this will enable us to contact you following your assessment.

If you have hearing aids, glasses, coloured lenses or use magnifiers or any other portable aids, please also bring these with you to assessment.

Is there anything else that I will need to do at assessment?

At assessment, you will be required to complete a Consent Form for Sensitive Data Processing to assist with the auditing of the University of Nottingham ACCESS Centre and to ensure that we comply with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). This will be explained to you in detail at assessment, however a copy of this form has been included at the end of this information sheet. This is for information only – you do not have to sign and return this at this stage.
How do I provide feedback on the Assessment process?

We welcome feedback on the service you have received from the University of Nottingham ACCESS Centre and would ask that you fill in and return the Feedback Questionnaire which will be provided to you following assessment. This helps us maintain a quality service.

How long will each stage of the process take?

Our timelines for processing each stage of your DSA is included within this Information Sheet.

I have a different question!

Check out our website:

http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/supportforyourstudies/accesscentre/index.aspx

Or contact either Lesley Morrice (Manager) or Gina Slater (Administrator) on 0115 8467780 or by email at: accesscentre@nottingham.ac.uk
Applying for the DSA and attending your DSA Assessment prior to commencing your University studies is particularly useful in order to enable appropriate disability-related provision or reasonable adjustments to be put in place at an early stage. However, major governmental changes have been made to the DSA in recent years that may impact on the recommendations that can be made by your DSA Needs Assessor and approved by your funding body and it is important for you to be made aware of these.

Computer/Equipment Recommendations

The Government takes the view that every student accessing higher education courses should have at least a basic computer and whilst we know that this is not always the case, basic specification computers can no longer be funded via the DSA for students funded by SFE, NHS and Research Councils.

Computers with a slightly higher than basic specification can only be funded via the DSA when specialist assistive software requiring more than a basic specification computer has also been recommended on disability-related grounds.

If funding for a computer and assistive software are recommended by your Assessor and agreed by the funding body and because of the Government’s expectations regarding computer access, a £200 student contribution towards the cost of a desktop or laptop computer will be required where you are funded by Student Finance England, the NHS or one of the Research Councils.

If a computer is recommended in your case, this does still represent good value for you as a student, given that assistive software appropriate to your disability-related needs is also provided and as your computer will be covered by warranty and all-risks insurance for the full duration of your studies.

Ordering the Equipment/Paying the £200

The approved supplier will be responsible for coordinating the collection of the £200 contribution, although there may be some funding available within your College or University towards this cost. However this cannot be guaranteed and any such contribution is likely to either be means tested or only considered where a student is in financial hardship. You should therefore discuss this further with your Disability Adviser or could contact the Financial Support Team at your University directly to identify their policy as regards this contribution.

Once you receive the letter from your funding body approving the recommendations that have been made in your report, you can go ahead and order the equipment and software. However, if you do go ahead and order this, particularly if there are several months to go before you start your higher education course of study, you should be aware that if you do not subsequently take up your course, you may need to either return or repay the cost of the equipment and software.

You may therefore wish to contact the approved supplier and advise them that although you will be placing an order for the equipment and software, you want them to delay processing this until you have a confirmed place. You can then contact them once you
have confirmation that you will be attending a higher education course. However, if you
do want to place the order at an earlier stage, then this is your choice and you may be
prepared to take this risk.

**Printer/Scanner/Copiers**

Although combined printers/scanners/copiers can be recommended via the DSA, as
with all DSA recommendations, this must be solely disability-related and Assessors are
expected to clearly evidence the need for hard copy materials (over and above that
which all students require) and why that additional need cannot be met through
College/University provision. Your Assessor will discuss this with you at assessment.

**MS Office**

Where a computer and specialist assistive software are recommended, you will also
need a copy of MS Office. This is no longer funded via the DSA, although due to an
arrangement with Microsoft, copies can usually be provided free via your University.
You should discuss this further with your Disability Adviser/IT Department.

**Non-Medical Helper Support**

You may have received some additional support throughout your education – such as
Note-takers, Readers, Practical Support Assistance, or Examination Support Workers
acting as Readers or Scribes.

Some support, including Specialist 1:1 Study Skills Support, Specialist Mentoring,
BSL/CSW Support or Specialist Note-taking, may be recommended by your DSA
Assessor for your H.E. course of study. If approved by your funding body, this can be
funded via your DSA.

However, the SFE and NHS DSAs will no longer fund some support workers, including
Practical Support, Library Assistance, Examination Support Workers or Standard Note-
takers. Reasonable adjustments and/or provision to meet your needs in these areas is
now the responsibility of the College or University. Therefore, even if these are areas
where you have previously experienced disability-related difficulties, specific
recommendations for support workers cannot be made by your DSA Assessor. However they will highlight the anticipated nature of your issues and recommend that the University/College should work with you to identify and consider strategies for
meeting those needs.

In the area of accessing information/taking notes during lectures and formal sessions
this may for example, include pod/vodcasts or lecture captures and copies of lecture
handouts being made available prior to lectures via Virtual Learning Environments
(VLE). However actual provision will vary from one institution to another. You will
therefore need to discuss this further with your Disability Adviser in order to ensure that
your disability-related needs can be met.

If you do not feel that your support needs are being met once you are at
University/College, you may wish to consider the SFE Exceptional Case Process and
should again discuss this further with your Disability Adviser.
Additional En-Suite Accommodation Costs

Funding towards en-suite accommodation that is required solely due to a disability-related need can no longer be funded via the SLC, NHS and Research Council DSAs where the accommodation is provided, managed or controlled by the College/University or its agent. Your Assessor will consider this with you at assessment. You should also discuss this further with your Disability Adviser or institution Accommodation Office if this affects you.

General Allowance

Books/Photocopying - Although you may benefit from having your own copies of books, or photocopied material on disability-related grounds, core text books are viewed as standard expenditure faced by all students and non-core books as optional items which will not generally be considered essential for DSA purposes. DSA Guidelines indicate that the institution is expected to meet the needs of disabled students by providing e-books or longer library loans and therefore funding towards the purchase of books or photocopying cannot normally be recommended via the SFE, NHS and Research Council DSAs.

Computer Consumables (ink/paper) – where a combined printer/scanner/copier has been recommended, we may also be able to recommend some funding towards printer ink and paper. However, this is not intended to cover all your costs and you should be aware that itemised copies of receipts will be required and that expenditure incurred prior to formal funding body approval of the recommendations made in your Needs Assessment report will not be retrospectively funded.

We do appreciate that the DSA funding and associated processes can be confusing!

If you do have any further questions that you did not discuss with your DSA Assessor on the day of your assessment, please just get in touch with us:

Contact Lesley Morrice (Manager) or Gina Slater (Administrator) - 0115 8467780 or by email at: accesscentre@nottingham.ac.uk
Dear Student

In addition to the normal data processing carried out by the University Of Nottingham ACCESS Centre ("the Centre"), the transfer of a copy of your needs assessment report to the Disabled Students Allowance Quality Assurance Group ("the auditor") may be required so that the auditor can audit the centre’s internal processes for dealing with needs assessments. These audits play an important part of ensuring that the centre is complying with all relevant legislation, internal and external guidance. Such compliance is vital to the centre so it can properly assess the needs of those that require assistance.

The information that the centre is proposing to transfer to the auditor is a copy of your completed needs assessment form, or other relevant information contained within your student record. As you will be aware, this includes the following information about you:

- identity and age;
- physical and/or mental health;
- living arrangements;
- higher education institution and course information.

This information includes personal data and sensitive personal data as defined under the Data Protection Act 1998. As the proposed transfer includes sensitive personal data (in this instance, health information about you), we require your consent before we are legally permitted to provide the auditor with your information, if selected as a student sample.

The personal data provided to the auditor would only be processed for the specific purpose of carrying out the audit of the centre. The data or needs assessment report information would not be retained by the auditor once the audit of the centre had been completed and accredited by DSA-QAG. This consent will be held by the centre for the duration of the audit process, alongside any other forms of consent you have provided to the centre in relation to other current data processing activities carried out by the centre in relation to your personal and sensitive personal data.

By signing this form at assessment, you are giving your consent to the transfer of your personal and sensitive personal data set out above from the centre to the auditor and to the processing of this data by the auditor, for the purpose described above.
### DSA NEEDS ASSESSMENT TIMELINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs Assessment Booking Enquiry</td>
<td>The University of Nottingham ACCESS Centre aims to offer you an appointment on the same day as you make initial contact with us either in person, by phone, or by email/letter or within 1 working day — subject to Funding Body confirmation. We will confirm this by letter or email by the next working day and send you a form to fill in.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Booking Confirmation</td>
<td>Where possible, you should return the following to us, no later than <strong>5 working days</strong> before your assessment:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Evidence relating to your disability/specific learning difficulty</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Letter from your funding Body confirming that you can attend a Needs Assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Completed Pre-Assessment Form that we will send you</td>
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<tr>
<td>Needs Assessment</td>
<td>The University of Nottingham ACCESS Centre aims to carry out your Needs Assessment within 15 working days of your initial request for a Needs Assessment. We are usually able to offer an earlier appointment, however, during busy times of the year or if your needs are particularly complex, there may be a delay in the appointment date we can offer. Allow approximately <strong>2 hours</strong> for your Assessment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>After the Needs Assessment</td>
<td>A draft or final copy of the Needs Assessment report should be emailed to you <strong>10 working days</strong> after your assessment. Read through the report carefully and contact us if there are any amendments or if you are happy with the report. If you do not get back to us within <strong>5 working days</strong> your report will be forwarded to your funding body.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queries</td>
<td>We aim to deal with any subsequent queries you raise within <strong>10 working days</strong> although this can take longer if your query is complex or if we need to refer back to your Assessor, the Equipment/Software Supplier or your Disability Adviser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report to Funding Body</td>
<td>Once your report has been approved by you, or any amendments have been made, copies of this will be sent to your Funding Body and, with your permission, to your Disability Adviser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Body contacts you</td>
<td>Your Funding Body should contact you approximately <strong>3-4 weeks</strong> after they have received your report to confirm the recommendations that have been agreed and how to go about getting the equipment and support. You will need to contact the approved equipment/software suppliers and Non-Medical Helpers Allowances Provider and provide them with a copy of the Funding Body approval letter in order to access what has been recommended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery of Equipment</td>
<td>The Equipment Suppliers should deliver your equipment and training approximately <strong>5-10 working days</strong> from receipt of your order, although during busy times this can take longer.</td>
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